

Will the euphemisms ever go away?

Euphemisms, if you remember your high school English class, are words that obscure the true meaning of a statement to make it more palatable. Will the agency that proclaims itself “the leading voice for the welfare of animals” in our city ever stop using them to obscure the true fate of animals in Indianapolis? Will IACC?

Anyone with a sincere concern for animal welfare hoped that the new administration at the Humane Society of Indianapolis would move beyond euphemisms. And sadly the current administration at IACC has reverted to using euphemisms that had been dismissed by the previous administration of Doug Rae.

Unfortunately, language is back to square one.

It’s all in the words

Consider this promotion for [the low cost spay-neuter clinic](#) planned to open in the spring of 2010:

["Nearly 12,000 unwanted dogs and cats were put down in Indianapolis last year. With your support, we'll put an end to unnecessary euthanasia in Indy – once and for all."](#)

"Put down" is a euphemism for "killed," not "euthanized".

Euthanasia is defined as the act or practice of ending the life of an individual suffering from a terminal illness or an incurable condition, as by lethal injection or the suspension of extraordinary medical treatment.

"Unnecessary euthanasia" is rhetorical gymnastics to avoid candidly describing the reality of killing. It’s traditional sheltering language that misleads the public — an attempt to make what actually happens to the animals in our shelters more acceptable. What sounds better, “euthanizing for space,” or *killing* for space?

And why would a humane society want to end a practice that alleviates incurable suffering? Ironically, the euphemism backfires here. To end **killing** — now *that* would be a desirable outcome.

Telling the truth

HSI also claims one of its values is [integrity](#):

We can be trusted to do what we say we will do. We tell the truth, even when it may be painful. We make decisions based on what we believe is the right thing to do for the animals, their owners and their prospective owners.

The painful truth is that healthy, adoptable animals aren't being "euthanized". They are being killed.

Why can't the two largest animal agencies in the city bring themselves to use correct terminology? Is it to obscure what is truly happening to the animals under their watch?

Are they simply confused? English can be a complicated language. Or are they afraid? Afraid of using the correct words; of being open and honest with the public? Afraid of being honest with themselves? Are they embarrassed by what actually takes place?

Donors deserve honesty

Perpetuating the deception benefits no one. People are tired of this aversion to honesty. It not only betrays the animals who die as a result of our failures, it also betrays the community. Donors, politicians, and the public want to know what's REALLY being done with their tax and donation dollars.

Why would city leaders consider allocating money from the city budget for adequate staffing or a fulltime veterinarian for IACC when the agency's message is that it's "euthanizing" the animals?

Move to ACT urges HSI and IACC to find the courage to use accurate language. One expects at least that much from an attorney, an ordained minister, the administrator of a metropolitan Animal Care and Control Division, or the Director of a Humane Society.

And the animals deserve at least that much respect.